In Ethiopia, extreme drought conditions are being exacerbated by the 2014–2016 El Niño, which is leading to nutrition and health problems for more than 10 million people. Ethiopia is not alone. El Niño is worsening already extreme weather and intense suffering in many parts of Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia. In the above photo, Ethiopian Red Cross Society volunteers brought food, healthcare and other essentials to the hard-hit and remote Afar region. Learn more about the global Red Cross and Red Crescent response to the 2014–2016 El Niño on page 24.

Photo: Marjo Leppänen/Finnish Red Cross
The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the National Societies.

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC is guided by seven Fundamental Principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.

All Red Cross and Red Crescent activities have one central purpose: to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements have one central purpose: to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements have one central purpose: to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent international organization. The ICRC is the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

World Humanitarian Summit: a big deal for humanity?

At the Istanbul meeting in May, donors agreed to give more support to local organizations and offer more unearmarked and multi-year funding. In exchange, they want greater accountability and impact. We asked people in countries affected by recurrent or protracted crises what these promises mean to them and what will it take to put them into action. Read more of their thoughts and share your own at www.rccmagazine.org

Georges Kettaneh
Secretary General, Lebanese Red Cross

The Humanitarian Summit was much more than just a two-day meeting for 9,000 people. It began long before with preparatory meetings, including here in Lebanon. Whatever impact will be felt will go on well into the future. In theory, the pledge to develop longer-term financing and give more support to local organizations was very positive. But now we have to see how it will work at the local level. For me, the measure of success will be in how well we manage to build the capacity of principled local organizations such as National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which have community acceptance and are there to respond over the long term.

At the Lebanese Red Cross we understand this well. The Syrian crisis has lasted more than six years now and we have been going full-speed ahead since the beginning. We ramped up our response and our capacity in order to maintain the intensity of our response. Before the conflict, the annual budget for our headquarters in Beirut was US$ 5 million. Today, it’s more than US$ 25 million. We grew our capacity to manage and control these resources by working with our partners. This is critical because strong, accountable and transparent organizations are more accepted by the community.

Our operational capacity has also expanded dramatically. The Lebanese Red Cross is leading and working with 21 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC. We are also sharing leadership in a lot of areas — health, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene promotion — and it’s a big challenge. It’s not just about responding but about working in complementary ways with government and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It’s very important that donors and partners understand all this. International NGOs can leave when they run out of money but we are still here, facing the community. So we have to be very clear in our plans and commitments so we can manage the expectations of communities and expand or reduce programmes or staff and volunteers in a proper and dignified way. The commitments made at the Summit to provide longer-term funding and more unearmarked funding could help foster this kind of stability, reliability, continuity and dignity both for the dedicated first responders and for the people to whom they are offering their comfort, care and support.

Merewalesi Nailatikau
Youth commission chair, Fiji Red Cross Society

I was quite proud of the Movement’s position at the Summit, particularly with its emphasis on human dignity and the idea of ‘intervention as local as possible, as international as necessary’. As well as our message concerning the humanitarian ‘eco-system’, that there is not one humanitarian system but rather many different systems and approaches. This helped sharpen people’s understanding that the Movement, with its Fundamental Principles and its way of working, must keep its own distinct approach even as it works alongside other large humanitarian systems.

Also, the Movement made its position on the importance of localizing the response very clear — something that was not otherwise given enough prominence at the Summit.

Frehiwot Worku
Secretary General, Ethiopian Red Cross Society

The World Humanitarian Summit was about delivering together — donors and humanitarian organizations — and coordinating our humanitarian response, while at the same time expanding the capacities of local organizations such as National Societies. This makes a lot of sense because if National Societies are more effective, donors will also be more supportive. But we all must be part of building that system together, and it is not just about money. Sometimes, it’s expertise that is required. We may need partners to embed within a National Society, to accompany them in developing organizational systems so they can manage the monitoring and reporting requirements of donors. In the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, meanwhile, we have to be able to compromise and get out of our comfort zone to engage with others more than we do. We are different from other humanitarian actors but we can create bridges to connect with them and expand our impact.

At the Summit to provide longer-term funding and more unearmarked funding could help foster this kind of stability, reliability, continuity and dignity both for the dedicated first responders and for the people to whom they are offering their comfort, care and support.

Guest editorials
In brief...

**Yellow fever outbreak could spread, IFRC warns**
A deadly yellow fever outbreak in Angola has now spread to China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Kenya. The IFRC warned in May that fears are growing that the disease will continue to spread internationally unless immediate action is taken. "Limited vaccine supplies, poor sanitation, inadequate disease surveillance systems and everyday cross-border interaction could turn a national outbreak into a larger crisis," said Fatoumata Nafie-Traili, director of IFRCs Africa region. In Angola and the DRC, the IFRC has deployed Regional Disaster Response Team members and released start-up funds from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to support anti-yellow fever operations. The IFRC also launched a US$ 1.45 million emergency appeal to support the Angola Red Cross and other local partners reach roughly 9 million people with vaccines and infection-prevention measures. Yellow fever is transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which is also responsible for spreading the Zika virus, dengue and chikungunya.

**Deaths at sea continue in the Mediterranean**
In May 2016 alone, more than 1,000 people were reported missing or drowned as they attempted to make the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe, according to the International Organization for Migration. The IFRC, its member National Societies and the ICRC continue to call for governments and institutions to ensure the protection of migrants and for all people to recognize their right to safety and dignity. Meanwhile Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers continued to help thousands of survivors on the sea’s southern and northern shores. In May, for example, Libyan Red Crescent volunteers provided food, blankets and vital health services to more than 200 people rescued near the port city of Zuwara and they transferred survivors requiring medical attention to nearby hospitals. Libyan Red Crescent teams also retrieved bodies of those who had drowned, ensuring they were transported with respect and dignity before being buried. In one incident in early June, they retrieved 117 bodies.

**El Niño sweeps southern Africa**
As El Niño-related drought conditions sweep across southern Africa, some 49 million people will likely be struggling to get adequate food by the end of the year, according to the IFRC, Lalisho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe all declared states of emergency, as have seven of South Africa’s nine provinces. Mozambique declared a ‘red alert’ in its central and southern provinces. In response, the IFRC has announced a US$ 110 million, four-year initiative to support the response of National Red Cross Societies in drought-affected countries in southern Africa. In addition to relief efforts, including emergency distributions of cash, the initiative will help at-risk communities expand traditional livelihoods. In one project, the Malawi Red Cross Society provides families with goats to breed and sell for income. The families then return some livestock to help other families.

**ICRC sparing the civilians of Fallujah**
Fierce fighting around the Iraqi city of Fallujah in May raised serious concerns about the well-being and safety of civilians still trapped in and around the city. The situation was particularly problematic for the tens of thousands of men, women, children and elderly people who remain stuck inside Fallujah, the largest town in Anbar province, and who have had very limited access to food, water and basic healthcare for the past two years. “Civilians must be spared and allowed to leave Fallujah safely, while houses and other civilian infrastructure must not be targeted,” said Katharina Ritze, ICRC head of delegation in Iraq.

**Fighting around the Iraqi city of Fallujah in May raised serious concerns about the well-being and safety of civilians still trapped in and around the city.**

**El Niño-related drought conditions sweep across southern Africa, some 49 million people will likely be struggling to get adequate food by the end of the year.**

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**Humanitarian index**
- 25. Percentage of global humanitarian aid that will go to locally-based groups according to the ‘Grand Bargain’, an agreement between donors and aid agencies signed at the Global Humanitarian Summit.
- 105. Number of Burundian children reconnected with their loved ones by the ICRC between April 2015 and April 2016.**
- 112. Number of documented attacks on hospitals in Syria in 2015, according to a recently formed consortium of leading medical establishments, known as The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition.***
- 2,900. Number of suspected cases of yellow fever reported in Angola as of June 2016. A total of 325 people were known to have died from the disease.****
- 1.3 million. Number of people who die as a result of wartime violence, self-inflicted injury and violence each year, 2 per cent of global mortality.**
- 31.6 million. Estimated number of people across southern Africa struggling to get adequate food due to worsening drought conditions as of May 2016.*****
- 125 million. Number of people estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance.******
- 25 billion. Amount in US dollars spent on humanitarian aid each year globally.****

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**Humanitarian financing**
A bigger piece of the pie
Among the agreements reached at the World Humanitarian Summit, a pledge to increase to 25 per cent the share of total humanitarian spending that goes directly to local and national organizations. But is this easier said than done?

**The World Humanitarian Summit**
A big deal for humanity?
Three months after the World Humanitarian Summit, what do those it sought to help think the big promises and agreements made in Istanbul will mean for them?

**Humanitarian funding in for the long haul**
Donors and relief organizations agree that people hit hard by recurring natural disaster or trapped in protracted conflict need stable, long-term support.

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**Emergency health**
The fight against Zika
With plenty of front-line experience fighting the mosquito that spreads chikungunya and dengue, National Societies in Latin America gear up against another mosquito-borne disease.

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**Non-communicable disease**
Something’s cooking in Navojoa
One cup social media, two handfuls of enthusiasm, a handful of exercise and healthy food, plus a dose of good-old-fashioned fun equal the ingredients of a healthy community. The Healthy Lifestyles recipe is catching on in Mexico and beyond.

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**Climate change**
The return of ‘super’ El Niño
Caused when surface water in tropical parts of the Pacific Ocean become warmer than average, the 2014–2016 El Niño weather patterns are wreaking havoc in various corners of the globe. This collection of images reveals what the current El Niño, which many are comparing to the 1997–1998 ‘super’ El Niño, is doing to communities around the world.

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**Leadership**
A big deal for humanity?

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**Resources**
Publications, online resources and videos including new commentaries on international humanitarian law and the Movement’s response to the Istanbul summit.

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**Humanitarian financing**
A bigger piece of the pie

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**A big deal for humanity?**

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**The first ones**
They are first on the scene and, usually, are the ones who remain after international helpers have gone home. These photos provide a glimpse into the daily dangers that first responders face, whether battling wildfires in western Canada, responding to bomb blasts in central Aleppo in Syria or helping communities in smaller, ‘forgotten’ crises.

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**Emergency health**
The fight against Zika

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Humanity under fire

Bombed hospitals. Health and first-aid workers killed. Heavily populated urban areas bombarded. What can be done to ensure respect for the rules of war?

It’s a sad and familiar pattern:

April 2015: Two brothers working for the local branch of the Yemen Red Crescent Society shot dead in the southern port city of Aden while evacuating wounded people to a waiting ambulance. Both were wearing the red crescent emblem. The same day, two Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers were killed while retrieving dead bodies and preparing shelters for people fleeing the fighting.

For each person lost, a wake of devastation. Family and colleagues shocked and grieving. Desperately wounded or sick people left without care. National Society, IFRC and ICRC leaders issuing joint statements condemning the attacks and calling on all parties to respect international humanitarian law (IHL) and to allow humanitarian workers safe and unimpeded access to people in need.

And then the cycle repeats itself:

September 2015: Two Yemen Red Crescent Society volunteers killed along with other civilians during an airstrike in the Al-Swaida area of Taiz, bringing to eight the number of Yemen Red Crescent Society staff and volunteers killed in the course of their duties between March and September 2015.

November 2015: Two Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers killed when a mortar shell hit a civilian area of Homs as they transported supplies as part of a project helping children traumatized by the conflict.

The list goes on

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, more than 52 Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society and Palestine Red Crescent aid workers have lost their lives trying to help others. These deaths are not isolated. They come over a backdrop in which laws protecting civilians in conflict are regularly ignored and in which the use of high-impact explosives in densely populated urban areas has become routine. On the same day the two Yemeni volunteers were killed in September, for example, more than 130 people attending a wedding in Yemen were reportedly killed by an airstrike.

This is not to say that IHL is never respected. In many war zones, people take part in operations on a daily basis in which aid workers gain assurances from fighters — based on humanitarian principles and law — that they will be not be fired on or otherwise harassed.

Such events don’t often make the news or go viral on social media. But such examples do have a concrete impact. The ICRC points out, for example, that the rules of war allow the humanitarian access needed in Syria to provide fresh water to 20 million people. The Ottawa Convention prohibiting the use and manufacture of landmines, meanwhile, has reduced annual deaths and injury from 20,000 per year to 3,000 per year.

In recent years, however, such signs of progress has been overshadowed by the constant bombardment of bad news for humanitarian law. In one day in Aleppo, Syria earlier this year, four medical facilities on both sides of the front lines were hit as hundreds of shells, bombs and mortars rained down on the city, killing more civilians.

“There can be no justification for these appalling acts of violence deliberately targeting hospitals and clinics,” Marianne Gasser, head of the ICRC in Syria, said in a statement after the attack. “There is no safe place anymore in Aleppo. Even in hospitals.”

Several of the deadliest attacks hit hospitals supported by Médécins sans Frontières (MSF). In just one case in May 2016, 14 people were killed, including at least two doctors. “(The attack) killed one of the last remaining paediatricians in the city,” Joanne Liu, the international president of the group, would later tell the United Nations (UN) Security Council.

But such incidents are not limited to the Syrian conflict. In October 2015, a United States warplane bombed a hospital run by MSF in Kunduz, Afghanistan. Forty-two people, including 24 patients, 14 health workers and four caretakers, were killed.

After the bombing, an investigation by US officials determined the pilot did not intend to target the hospital and that the incident was due to a series of command-chain and pilot errors.
There can be no justification for these appalling acts of violence deliberately targeting hospitals and clinics. There is no safe place anymore in Aleppo. Even in hospitals.

Marianne Gasser, head of the ICRC delegation in Syria

While violations of the rules of war tend to get more headlines, there are daily examples, such as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy heading towards the villages of saving lives during conflict. This convoy, that shows how international this Syrian Arab Red Crescent aid organizations (NGOs) on an equal footing with states attending endorsed a joint statement affirming the importance of IHL and protect civilian populations and aid workers, please see www.rcrcmagazine.org

The roots of respect

In the absence of a clear and effective enforcement mechanism, efforts to encourage better compliance through softer methods continue. The ICRC, for example, continues to urge states, armed forces and non-state armed groups to weave principles embedded in the Geneva Conventions into both policy and practice. The efforts range from training sessions with soldiers and top brass, to lobbying lawmakers to enact legislation that codifies IHL into national laws. In too many increasingly complex conflicts, which feature a proliferation of non-state armed groups with a wide range of political philosophies and non-hierarchical command structures, that task has become more complicated. Traditional IHL training and dissemination is possible when forces have a ‘vertical structure’ and clear hierarchies, but is not easy in many armed conflicts today.

“Look at Libya, where there were 246 armed groups registered in Misrata alone,” notes Fiona Terry, a researcher at ICRC who has written extensively on humanitarian action in conflict. That said, Terry warns against the tendency of some observers to see that armed groups are the main violators of IHL. “States have also violated IHL and committed atrocities,” she says.

Given the changing nature of conflict, the ICRC wants to know more about why people do or don’t violate the rules of war, whatever kind of organization they may belong to. For this reason, the ICRC commissioned Fiona Terry and other researchers to update a 2004 study called The Roots of Behaviour in War. The update looks at what impact the integration of IHL training within armed forces has had, why violations occur and what restraints people from violating the rules of war. This research could inform new approaches best suited to today’s conflicts. In the meantime, says Helen Durham, director of Law and Policy at the ICRC, part of the answer lies in doing a better job at communicating not just about violations but also about examples of when the law is working and the concrete impact that respect has on the ground. “Demonstrating the practical value of restricting suffering during war reminds everyone of the importance of IHL,” says Durham. “While it can seem really hard in the face of information received every day, it is in everyone’s interest to continue to raise the fact that even wars have limits.”

Malcolm Lucas
Malcolm Lucas is editor of Red Cross Red Crescent magazine.

To learn more about movement efforts to ensure respect for IHL and protect civilian populations and aid workers, please see www.rcrcmagazine.org

A total loss of respect?

The images appear daily on TV, online and in social media. Bombings of hospitals, extrajudicial executions and other gross violations of the rules of war. No wonder some question whether the system of laws protecting people during conflict is losing ground. At a recent forum entitled ‘Is the law of war in crisis?’ RLI expert Marco Sassoli answered that question with a ‘yes’ and a ‘no’.

“International law generally is in crisis,” Sassoli told the gathering. “So it is not astonishing that IHL is also perceived as in a crisis. It’s not necessarily the laws that are at fault, however. “The Geneva Conventions contain the right answers,” even for today’s conflicts, he says. The problem is respect for these laws. But, Sassoli argues, despite the horrific headlines, there is more compliance with IHL than first meets the eye.

The rise of social media, citizen journalists and human rights organizations using mobile phones to document the effects of warfare on people who live in war zones has shed much-needed light on violations of IHL. “On the other hand, it creates the impression that IHL is only violated,” says Sassoli. “I have also seen plenty of respect for IHL in some conflicts. Understandably, NGOs and the media only report on violations.”

So to what degree are the Geneva Conventions respected? This is a difficult question to answer, but a recent ICRC project to update commentaries on the Geneva Conventions shows that for many states, IHL is very much a very relevant body of law applied in policy, in practice and in courtrooms.

Even in war zones such as Syria, the laws of war play a vital role, says Jean-Marie Henckaerts, head of the Commentaries Update Unit, part of ICRC’s Legal Division.

“Whenever we are able to gain access across front lines, delivering clean drinking water, medical aid and relief, it shows that these laws are saving lives,” he says. “We must avoid falling into a vicious circle in which states and armed groups argue that because the laws are being violated, they are not working and so can be further violated.”

© ICRC/Reuter/Abdulrah
A big deal for humanity?

Three months after delegates to the World Humanitarian Summit have gone back to their communities, what will all the big promises mean over the long term?

WITH THE WAR IN SYRIA in its sixth year, and upwards of 2.7 million refugees of that war now living in Turkey, the choice of Istanbul as host for the World Humanitarian Summit was particularly poignant. One didn’t need to look far to confront the very challenges the global meeting was seeking to address.

“There are hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in Istanbul,” noted Naci Yorulmaz, vice president of the Turkish Red Crescent Society, who was cautiously optimistic that the global meeting would be a greater local involvement in humanitarian decision-making. For Yorulmaz, the true test of how well the Summit attains that goal is whether the people affected by conflict and other emergencies see any meaningful change in their situations.

“We should go out and say to them: ‘We had another meeting in an expensive hotel, talking about your problems. But what needs to change for you on a daily basis?’”

One person in a good position to answer this question is AHakam Shaar. Born and raised in the Syrian city of Aleppo, Shaar is a researcher at the Aleppo Project, a platform for Syrians and non-Syrians to discuss the future of this war-torn city. Shaar says many of his fellow Syrians feel the ideas proposed at the Summit are indeed relevant.

But he said it’s hard for many of them to see how the agreements made in Istanbul affect the dire situation people face every day. “Many of the criticisms of the Summit were that, although it called for fighting the root causes of human suffering — rather than always remedying the situation — there were no suggested mechanisms to achieve this,” he said.

Herculean task

While the Summit produced nothing close to a radical rethink of the aid system, or any ground-breaking commitments to the protection of civilians (see page 4), 48 states did sign a new pledge in support of international humanitarian law. Further, the meeting produced many constructive disruptions to business as usual. Perhaps the most significant outcome was the signing of the ‘Grand Bargain’ — a package of reforms to make aid delivery more efficient and sustainable — signed by the top 30 donors and agencies and supported by the IFRC and the ICRC.

A key element of the Grand Bargain is a focus on increased ‘localisation’ with a target of 25 per cent of humanitarian aid going as directly as possible to local and national agencies. Currently, less than 0.2 per cent of aid monitored by the Financial Tracking Service goes directly to local humanitarian organisations.

Elhadj As Sy, secretary general of the IFRC, says the Grand Bargain was a significant achievement. “Some of the outcomes of the Summit, including the Grand Bargain, the increased recognition given to local action and local actors, and the emphasis placed on putting communities at the centre of our work, should help strengthen our response,” he said in a statement at the Summit. “Ultimately, the success of this Summit is determined by what happens next; by our ability to translate these ideas and momentum into actions that improve the lives of the world’s most vulnerable.”

Peter Maurer, president of the ICRC, agreed. “The Grand Bargain is not a panacea for all the problems in the humanitarian ecosystem, but it will help make sure money is put to optimal use and, crucially, help to raise new funds,” he said.

A starting point

These commitments were also welcomed by many small, relatively young, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in solidarity with local communities hit by crisis or conflict. Mohammed Katoub, from the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), welcomes the idea that a greater percentage of funds raised goes directly to organizations working on the ground. More than one-third of SAMS’ funds come from private donations but the

THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL

Many of the most significant and long-lasting outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) are the result of work done well before 3,000 delegates gathered in Istanbul in May 2016. Building on collaboration in 2015 that led to the adoption of a Movement-wide statement to the WHS, as well as Movement position papers on the Grand Bargain and other issues, observers say the 125 Movement participants (representing 72 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC) were able to have a significant influence on the final WHS outcomes.

And well before the Summit opened its doors, Movement leaders were building consensus with other key humanitarian leaders. One example is an article, co-authored by IFRC Secretary General Elhadj As Sy and Stephen O’Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Appearing in the Huffington Post, the article made the case for greater localization of aid and more investment in resilience. “The premise is simple,” they argued. “Investing in national and local skills, systems and knowledge to build resilience and preparedness will save lives, cut costs and preserve hard-won development gains.”

Once in Istanbul, the Movement played a key role in pushing for a rethink of humanitarian financing, with more funding going to local actors, and more emphasis placed on strengthening local capacity to respond, complemented by national, regional and international organizations where needed. At the same time, the Movement was able to get recognition from key UN officials that the diverse humanitarian sector is more of an ‘eco-system’, not one monolithic humanitarian system falling under UN supervision.

The ICRC and National Societies, meanwhile, were key players pushing for 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to go to local and national responders by 2020, as well as long-term institutional capacity building — two points strongly affirmed in the final Grand Bargain agreement.

For the ICRC, the Summit was a chance to make the point that when it comes to conflict, the most significant contribution towards alleviating suffering won’t come from changes in the way aid is delivered, but through political resolutions of conflict and through respect of international humanitarian law (see page 4). But the ICRC also joined National Societies and the IFRC in efforts to encourage donors to increase the percentage of their funding that is unearmarked or softly earmarked by 2020. “The commitment by donors to provide more unearmarked funding and ‘freed’ situations will allow us to better carry out our humanitarian activities in conflict zones that are out of the media spotlight, for which we receive little designated funding,” said ICRC President Peter Maurer.

A coordinated Movement makes its mark

Many of the most significant and long-lasting outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) are the result of work done well before 3,000 delegates gathered in Istanbul in May 2016. Building on collaboration in 2015 that led to the adoption of a Movement-wide statement to the WHS, as well as Movement position papers on the Grand Bargain and other issues, observers say the 125 Movement participants (representing 72 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC) were able to have a significant influence on the final WHS outcomes.
Funding the ‘unsexy’

While discussions at the Summit helped to bring about greater consensus on exactly these issues, many non-governmental organizations, particularly the smaller ones, say it’s still unclear how the Summit’s grand promises will help them and their communities develop sustainable solutions.

Many of the smaller organizations that attended the Istanbul event could not take part in key Summit plenary sessions but were able to show off their work at stalls in an exhibition hall five stories below the main conference rooms. At one stall, Anna Tuson, the manager of perhaps the smallest NGO to attend the Istanbul event, Small Projects Istanbul, casts a proud eye over her stall as throngs of customers queue up to buy jewellery, woollen hats and bracelets all made by Syrian refugee women living in Istanbul’s Fatih district. “We are the smallest fish here but we seem to be doing the best!” she says.

The funds generated allow their children to go to school rather than working punishing hours in the city’s numerous textile factories. What does the project’s manager, Tuson, think of the Grand Bargain’s idea that local organizations such as hers should get a greater share of resources? She likes the idea in theory, but she remains realistic given the demands that donors might place on small organizations. “All our money comes from private donations, crowd-funding and little fund-raisers in cafes,” she says. “The biggest problem is nobody wants to pay for ‘unsexy’ things like rent, utilities or staff wages, which are crucial. They say what they will pay for, like desks and books, but that’s not what we need.”

In the coming months, donors and humanitarian organizations, local and international, will be grappling with how to get exactly what is most needed to those who need it most at the local level. And they must do it even as the emergency needs continue to mount and as people in many places in the world are simply trying to survive day to day.

When The Aleppo Project’s Shaar asks fellow Syrians what they think the Summit’s proposals will mean for people in cities such as Aleppo over time, many are simply not ready to say. “Some of our participants are not psychologically willing to say how things will be in the future — the priority for them is to think about how to stop what is happening now,” he said.

By Andrew Connolly

Andrew Connolly is a freelance journalist based in Istanbul, Turkey.

rest is funnelled through international NGOs, he says. “Hopefully after this we will get direct funds from governments and this will save the overhead costs of international NGOs when they act as a third party,” he said.

But many say the Summit is more of a starting point for new level of concerted action rather than the goal itself. Katoub, for example, is deeply concerned about the protection of his colleagues, and other healthcare and aid workers, delivering services within the war-torn country. Without greater protection, changes in the funding paradigm will not bear fruit — and the Summit itself provided few short-term fixes.

“The outcome will not come quickly, but we have to keep highlighting our needs,” he says. “We are losing our friends and colleagues inside Syria every day so we push for more protection for them and to ensure humanitarian access for besieged and hard-to-reach areas.”

No more ‘wait and see’

Many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, meanwhile, are hopeful that a new funding paradigm will lead to more sustainable and effective programmes within communities.

Combined with sustainable sources of domestic funding — raised within the country by local organizations — National Societies will be better placed to be truly responsive to local needs, and less dependent on external, international donors, says Frehiwot Worku, secretary general of the Ethiopian Red Cross.

“Otherwise the way we respond currently is to wait for emergencies to happen and then get help,” says Worku. “At the moment there is not nearly enough emphasis on preparation and post-disaster resilience.”
The Grand Bargain

Could bridging the gap between humanitarian and development financing help expand the pie for these increasingly long-term humanitarian responses? The recent United Nations Too important to fail — addressing the humanitarian financing gap (High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the UN General Assembly) estimated the funding gap for humanitarian action in 2015 to be US$ 15 billion.

By comparison, total humanitarian aid from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development donors that same year was US$ 13.6 billion, despite an increase of 11 per cent. Filling the gap will be a huge challenge given the influx of refugees to Europe, especially as many donors, including Denmark, Germany and Sweden, are using a growing share of their aid to cover housing and other services for asylum seekers at home.

But it is not only more money that is needed. The humanitarian system also has to become more effective, efficient and transparent, according to aid experts. To address the shortcomings, the ‘Grand Bargain’ agreed to at the World Humanitarian Summit (see page 8) includes 50 commitments to improve the global humanitarian system. In exchange for more transparency and accountability from humanitarian actors, donors have among other things agreed to provide more multi-year funding.

In some ways, the Grand Bargain formalizes a process by which some donors have already begun to adjust. The Swedish aid agency Sida, for example, has been trying to put development funding streams to work in what Peter Lundberg, director of humanitarian assistance at Sida, referred to as the ‘grey zones’ between development and humanitarian aid.

“We are grappling with these issues,” says Lundberg. “We are trying to find ways to relieve some of the pressure on humanitarian budgets, taking key humanitarian principles into full consideration.”

The new Swedish five-year country strategy on development for asylum seekers at home.

The move to increase direct funding to local humanitarian organizations comes in the wake of growing international attention to the funding imbalance between international and local actors, in which the advantages local organizations have in delivering aid in affected communities.

The IFRC’s World Disasters Report 2015, for example, concluded that the current donor regime favours international actors like United Nations (UN) agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), while leaving national governments and local NGOs with a far smaller piece of the pie.

How much smaller is not entirely clear. The best available estimate of funds channelled directly to local and national humanitarian responders last year was 0.2 per cent, though it is generally agreed that this doesn’t reflect the full picture. Even Development Initiatives, the United Kingdom-based think tank that came up with the figure, says the true percentage of funding these responders actually receive is likely much higher. “It is simply our best estimate of what local and national NGOs receive directly given currently available data,” says Sophia Swithin, head of research and analysis at Development Initiatives.

The reasons for the funding imbalance are many. Strict reporting standards meant to provide basic accountability to taxpayers in donor countries and to prevent corruption or funding of organizations considered as ‘terrorist’, are almost impossible for local organizations with weaker administrative capacity to meet. As a result, donors use international agencies as middlemen, who take a percentage of the aid for administrative costs.

Critics argue this makes aid more expensive and less efficient. But what are the challenges of sending money more directly to local organizations? For donors, doing so would probably entail more agreements to local organizations. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry, for example, has an explicit goal of decreasing the number of agreements with partners from 5,500 to 4,000 over the coming year.

Sida’s Peter Lundberg, meanwhile, says it is out of the question for Sida to channel...
The first ones

They are the first ones on the scene. After the bomb blast, after the alarm sounds, they are on their way, on foot, in an ambulance or whatever it takes. With all the talk in international circles about supporting and protecting local humanitarian action, it’s a good time to remind ourselves what first responders face in their daily lives. As humanitarian organizations discuss strategies and long-term plans to support them, local volunteers and aid workers must sometimes make life-and-death decisions in seconds. These photos of first responders provide a glimpse into the daily dangers people on the front lines face, be they wildfires in western Canada, bomb blasts in Aleppo, Syria or any number of smaller, localized emergencies or health crises that don’t make the international news. They also offer a chance to reflect on concrete things the international community can do to ensure that first responders are better supported and protected. After all, one day, our lives may depend on it.
Local first responders work with a range of other local, national and, sometimes, international relief workers. When wildfires began destroying entire communities in western Canada this year, fire fighters from around the world were mobilized. The Canadian Red Cross Society complemented these efforts, raising money for relief activities and offering support to people needing shelter and trying to find displaced loved ones.

Photo: RED Cross Society

Studies have shown that 90 per cent of people whose lives are saved during emergencies are saved by people who know first aid. This is one reason why the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement trains people from all walks of life in basic first aid. Here, the ICRC and The Palestine Red Crescent Society provide training to guards at Al-Aqsa mosque, in the old city of Jerusalem, where thousands of people visit each year. Many may suffer from heat stroke or be affected by episodes of violence that often erupt in this politically tense city.

Photo: Jesus Andres Serrano Redondo/ICRC

Local responders are critical because they mobilize for thousands of relatively small, localized disasters that claim as many lives in total as major disasters but do not get the attention of international media and aid organizations. Here is one example: Kenya Red Cross Society rescuers evacuate a woman from the rubble of a six-story building that collapsed after heavy rains in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2016.

Photo: KEITH BEHAN/Thomas Mukoya

In many countries caught in political or armed conflict, local volunteers are the only ones who can access tense areas and can respond to the dire needs of people in crisis. Here, Iraqi Red Crescent Society workers provide relief assistance to people who fled from intense fighting in the city of Fallujah and surrounding towns in June 2016.

Photo: Iraqi Red Crescent Society/IFRC

In conflict zones, or other situations of enduring crisis, every day brings new emergencies and needs to which humanitarians must respond. Sometimes, people who respond work for international organizations that have established a long-term presence in the affected country. Here in Saada, Yemen, for example, local employees of the ICRC distribute household items to people affected by the ongoing fighting.

Photo: ICRC

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In order to bolster the efforts of local first responders, the IFRC has developed regional teams of responders, called Regional Disaster Response Teams (RDRT), with special areas of expertise. Here, Isara Iose, an RDRT member from the Samoa Red Cross Society who specializes in water, sanitation and hygiene, joins a team of Fiji Red Cross Society volunteers to help rebuild toilets damaged during Cyclone Winston in February 2016.

Photo: Corinne Ambler/IFRC

Left: Many times, the people who help the most during crisis are themselves suffering great hardship. When fighting broke out in Wau, a city in central South Sudan in June, Christine was one of many South Sudan Red Cross volunteers forced to flee. Today she helps raise awareness among displaced people on how to maintain hygiene in difficult conditions.

Photo: Alperen Sprıkalı/QRC. (Centre) Red Cross volunteer Jing Luen in Taiwan, China was one of many volunteers who helped people cope with the damage caused by Typhoon Nepartak, which struck the area in July 2016 and caused widespread damage.

Photo: Sam Smith/IFRC. (Right) Already experienced helping people affected by wildfires in her home province of Quebec, Canadian Red Cross volunteer Cindy Balfouron travelled several hundred kilometres to spend weeks supervising a team of volunteers responding to the wildfires in the province of Alberta.

Photo: Canada Red Cross Society

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Photo: RED Cross Society/Mark Ritch
“Hey neighbour, what are you doing?” “Hey Karl, I’m putting screens on our doors and windows.” “What for?” “Zika.” “Zika? That’s a flu, right?”

Well, not exactly. In this dialogue, an excerpt from a radio commercial broadcasting throughout Latin America, one neighbour advises another that Zika is a virus that causes mild fever, rash and red eyes. “Doctors suspect it could also be responsible for microcephaly in newborns,” he adds, “but there is nothing to fear if you just follow some basic rules.”

The radio commercials are just a part of what National Societies in Latin America are doing to combat the spread of Zika, a virus spread by the same kind of mosquito that also transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. Found throughout the Americas, except in Canada and parts of Chile, the virus is already affecting 46 countries, particularly hot and humid regions of Latin America.

Only one in four people with the Zika infection develops symptoms. The most common ones include low fever or rash, conjunctivitis, and muscle and joint pain, which appear a few days after a person has been infected by a mosquito or after sexual intercourse with an infected person. With no vaccine for Zika available, the best form of prevention is to avoid mosquito bites. In these photos, we take you along with Red Cross volunteers in Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador as they walk the streets, go door-to-door, visit schools, clean up rubbish and even hop on buses with the anti-Zika message. As Zika spreads more widely in the Americas, such front-line, community-level work could play a critical role controlling both this epidemic and future outbreaks of dengue and chikungunya.

The fight against Zika

With plenty of front-line experience fighting the mosquito that spreads chikungunya and dengue, National Societies in Latin America gear up against another mosquito-borne disease.

“Please now come into the courtyard with your brooms ready,” the voice in the school public-address system booms through the school hallways. “It’s time to start the cleaning-up campaign to eliminate the mosquito.” A few minutes later, students are in the courtyard, sweeping up any trash where mosquitoes might find even a small place to breed. More than 1,200 students in five schools of the Soyapango Municipality in El Salvador are part of the ‘Mosquito Seen, Mosquito Eliminated’ campaign, a project of the IFRC and the Salvadorean Red Cross Society in partnership with the ministries of health and education. The students divide into two groups: one that works inside the school and the other in nearby communities along with a teacher. “It is very important to clean up the sinks and the gutters on the roofs,” explains one student.

Photo: Salvadorean Red Cross Society
Something’s cooking in Navojoa

One cup social media. Two spoonfuls of enthusiasm. A dash of regular exercise and a basket of garden-grown vegetables. These are just some of the ingredients that go into the ‘Healthy Lifestyles’ initiative — a recipe catching on in communities in Mexico and beyond.

Donning a white apron, marked with the ‘vida Saludable’ (Healthy Lifestyles) logo and armed with a wooden spoon and chopping knife, Francisco Javier Barreras, the Mexican Red Cross emergency management coordinator for the city of Navojoa, cooks up a savoury, low-cost and easy-to-cook dish of chicken, vegetables and rice. All the while, a digital camera records the cook in action — peeling the carrots, chopping the zucchini (courgettes) and narrating each step. A healthy food connoisseur becoming known for his self-made, healthy cooking show, Barreras shares his recipes on social media (YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, to name a few). Many of the ingredients come from his own garden, which boasts a variety of fruits and vegetables, from mangos to pumpkin. “We need to offer ingredients that people know and like, or else they just won’t eat it,” he says.

The home-cooked food show is just one of Barreras’s contributions to an IFRC-initiated internet website platform called Healthy Lifestyles, which helps create awareness about non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cancer by promoting good eating habits, exercise and reduced alcohol consumption and smoking. The approach is similar to an e-learning course and it includes information ranging from how to detect the symptoms of diabetes to healthy eating tips and suggestions for community bike rides, and exercise sessions in local schools and parks. The programme has enjoyed early success in Mexico, a country with the highest obesity rate in the world, according to the World Health Organization. Problems related to obesity account for 10 per cent of the country’s health budget and diabetes type 2 is the leading cause of death, followed by heart disease. In all, non-communicable diseases cause 77 per cent of the nation’s deaths. “We all have family members who either have these diseases or have died from them,” says Isela Velázquez, Red Cross youth coordinator for the Mexican city of Guanajuato. For Velázquez, working with young children in schools is the key. They are just now forming their habits and they can influence their parents, she says. Similarly, in Mexico City, volunteers bring games to children in marginalized communities, to help create healthy habits and to provide safe, fun social activities that could also serve as alternatives to drugs or violence.

Check out the Healthy Lifestyles online community at www.healthylifestylecommunity.org

© From garden to Instagram, Francisco Javier Barreras’s recipes begin with fresh, home-grown ingredients and end up as colourful photos and videos that he shares through social media. It’s all part of building the Healthy Lifestyle virtual community, where members can share simple and cost-effective recipes as alternatives to fast food. Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC
For many, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes are a family affair. Rosa Isela Martinez, who lives in Celeya, about 200 kilometers north of Mexico City, visits the grave of her father, who suffered from diabetes, as does her husband. Both parents also struggle with obesity and they hope to break the cycle by restricting their children’s sugar intake. It’s a struggle because both she and her husband work long hours and often not only once or twice a day. This habit, common among the poorer, working class, can be unhealthy as it slows down the body’s metabolism and encourages desperate, erratic eating.

Meanwhile, much of the food that is cheap and easily available in markets such as this one in Guanajuato, Mexico, is heavy in carbohydrates, fats and simple sugars that the body metabolizes quickly into fat. The sugars in fibrous fruits and vegetables, however, are digested by the body more slowly, providing more nutrients and producing less fat. Photo: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC

Many in Guanajuato feel the way to break the cycle is by educating young people and creating healthy habits before bad ones set in. “We need to break the cycle of poor eating habits, as well as excessive smoking and alcohol consumption,” says Pedro Idirín, a member of the National Red Cross Council and a state delegate for Guanajuato. For this reason, Mexican Red Cross volunteers regularly visit schools where they offer nutrition lessons, guide students through the online Healthy Lifestyles e-learning course and try to instil the habit of regular exercise. “Exercise should be like brushing your teeth every day,” says Idirín.

Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC

One challenge for many people in Mexico is a lack of regular health screenings that might indicate early warning signs of diabetes or hypertension. For this reason, volunteers visit schools where test results could offer a concrete incentive for young people to change their habits before illness sets in. Volunteers also reach out to other communities with little access to healthcare. At this market in Nonoa, people come from rural communities to buy essential supplies for the week. By offering the checks for free at the market, people don’t have to lose a day’s pay just to go to the doctor. And for many people who earn very little, a visit to the doctor isn’t even an option.

Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC

Volunteers also visit urban neighbourhoods with limited access to health services and healthy nutrition options. Here in the Popular Cascada neighbourhood of Mexico City, volunteers engage children in popular, traditional games like hula hoop or kicking soccer balls through rings.

Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC

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Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC
The return of ‘super’ El Niño

Though they come from different continents, the images are eerily similar: a lake in Vietnam that supplied water to local farms and communities now completely dry; a major river in Colombia that nourished the fishing trade now a narrow trickle surrounded by a basin of cracked mud; a shrinking watering hole in southern Malawi. These are just a few examples of the havoc the 2014–2016 El Niño weather patterns are wreaking in various corners of the globe. Caused when surface water in tropical parts of the Pacific Ocean becomes warmer than average and this heat is released into the atmosphere, the El Niño weather patterns in many areas go unnoticed or have beneficial impacts. But they can also cause extreme problems when too much, or too little, rain falls. In Peru, El Niño has caused heavy rains and floods. In Canada, it helped create the conditions for massive wildfires. In many parts of Africa, the 2014–2016 El Niño has contributed to massive crop failures, livestock starvation and food insecurity for more than 30 million people. These photos show what the current El Niño, which many are comparing to the 1997–1998 ‘super’ El Niño, is doing to communities around the world and what’s being done to help people cope.

In Vietnam’s coastal Mekong Delta region, El Niño has turned once verdant rice paddies and a network of canals and lakes into brown, desert-like swaths of salty land and farther up the delta, “Salinity is four times higher than seasonal averages,” said Phan Duy Le, vice chairman of Quoi Dien commune in Thanh Phu district, Ben Tre province. Lakes like this one in Ninh Thuan province have all but dried up. All told, the drought has severely affected more than 1.75 million people in 18 provinces. Photo: Giang Pham/IFRC

In the Afar district in northern Ethiopia, people have been hoping, in vain, for much needed rainfall, as severe drought has ruined three consecutive harvests right across the country. More than 10 million people are in need of food aid. The drought makes access to food difficult in Ethiopia where up to 80 per cent of people make their living from farming. The situation in the country has not been this severe since the mid-1980s, when famine led to more than 400,000 deaths. “In Afar, people’s livelihoods and main income comes from cattle, but almost all the cows have now died,” says Manjo Leppänen, an IFRC logistics delegate in Ethiopia. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross

In Somaliland, Somalki, cyclones like this one are both feared and seen as a sign of rain. These days, the cyclones have been more common than the rain however, forcing people from the border region between Ethiopia and Somaliland to the coastal areas looking for green land to graze their livestock. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross

In response to the crisis, volunteers and staff of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society have endured extreme temperatures and difficult travel to hard-to-reach regions in order to deliver much-needed water and sanitation services, nutrition, livelihood support and healthcare, particularly for malnourished children under five years and pregnant and lactating women. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross

In the mid-1980s, when famine led to more than 10 million people being on the brink of starvation, the IFRC set up a regional office in Ethiopia to address the climate-related crises sweeping the region. The amount in US dollars the IFRC hopes to raise as part of a four-year initiative to support the response of National Red Cross Societies across the region.

El Niño in numbers

1.75 million: Number of Vietnamese people directly affected by El Niño-related drought conditions, which have now lasted two years.
10 million: Estimated number of people in Ethiopia in need of food aid due to El Niño-related drought.
49 million: Number of people across southern Africa expected to be struggling to get adequate food by the end of the year.
110 million: The amount in US dollars the IFRC hopes to raise as part of a four-year initiative to help National Societies in southern Africa address the climate-related crises sweeping the region.

The people pictured left travelled more than 100 kilometres but couldn’t find food for their animals. Many families lost most or all of their livestock on the way. At the outskirts of Qulujeed village, Ethiopian Red Cross Society volunteers provided water and food for the people, but for many of their animals it was already too late. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross
In the Diffa region of Niger, tens of thousands of refugees and displaced people are living in harsh conditions because of the fighting in neighbouring Nigeria. Local communities — already struggling with economic hardship due to drought and the loss of cross-border trade with Nigeria — are finding it hard to cope. Agricultural output, which is concentrated around Lake Chad, has plummeted and thousands of nomadic herders are stuck where there is not enough grazing land or water for their livestock. The family of 60-year-old Maina M’Bodo owned around 100 cows that grazed on islands on the Nigerian side of Lake Chad, before the fighting forced them to move. “The rebels attacked us and killed five members of my family, including one of my children,” he says. “They took all our cattle. By taking my cows, they’ve taken my life.” M’Bodo’s family received building materials and food aid from the ICRC and when the family arrived in Yebi, near the border with Nigeria, the village chief gave them some land to set up home. “I sell straw now and my wives earn a living by grinding millet for the locals,” he says.

Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Cosmos for ICRC

Water is a scarce resource for the thousands of displaced people and refugees who have fled the fighting in Nigeria. To avoid the queues at wells, some villagers in Toumour are drawing water from a pond where livestock drink. To provide more people with clean drinking water, the ICRC has drilled new boreholes. The ICRC is also boosting access to clean water in areas where water is scarce but the population has risen — creating the potential for tensions. In 2015, the ICRC provided emergency food aid to more than 200,000 people — refugees, displaced people and locals. Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Cosmos for ICRC

ICRC support for doctors in Diffa regional hospital in Niger helps them carry out emergency operations on patients who would otherwise have to travel more than 1,000 kilometres to the capital, Niamey. Here, an ICRC nurse checks on a patient receiving intravenous rehydration.

Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Cosmos for ICRC

El Niño impacts each area differently. The best way to judge whether El Niño is likely to bring too much or too little rainfall is to monitor seasonal forecasts. In Peru, at the end of 2015, seasonal and short-term forecasts of heavy rain triggered a range of measures that included water purification, fumigation against disease-carrying mosquitoes, sanitation measures and distribution of hygiene kits to families in numerous communities. With help from the IFRC, the Peruvian Red Cross offered a training workshop and field exercise on emergency shelters for volunteers and staff in Chiclayo. Photo: Peruvian Red Cross

In many places, El Niño struck just as other crises were already unfolding. In April 2015, people in Burundi began fleeing their country due to pre-election violence. Then El Niño came along, causing extensive flooding that destroyed homes, schools, roads and bridges. The Burundi Red Cross provided first aid to the injured and set up two camps for those left homeless by the floods, among other things. Photo: Burundi Red Cross

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nel funds directly to local first responders. Sida funds that go to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, for example, are dispersed via the IFRC or the Swedish Red Cross. Other local organizations are funded via the Country-Based Pool Funds run by the UN’s Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “There is only one layer between us and the local NGO,” he says, referring to the OCHA funds. In the Pakistan fund, he says, 60-70 per cent of the money goes to local organizations. The United Kingdom, meanwhile, is one of three donors supporting the NGO-run START Network that directs almost half of its resources to local organizations. It also launched a Disasters Emergency Preparedness Programme last year with US$ 53 million in funding to improve the capacity of local and national NGOs. Rather than transfer funds directly, the UK wants to reach the 25 per cent goal by supporting efforts of international NGOs and the UN to pass on more funds to national and local partners.

Likewise, Denmark recognizes the advantages of local organizations and is committed to the overall aim of increasing support for local and national responders. But the Danish aid administration lacks the capacity to implement the level of monitoring that directs funding to local groups who would demand, says Stephan Schønemann at the Danish Foreign Ministry. Notwithstanding donors’ limitations, some say the continued heavy reliance on international organizations is simply not tenable. An evaluation of Denmark’s humanitarian aid by the UK-based aid monitoring organization ITAD questions why so much of Denmark’s aid is channelled through UN agencies. These agencies “do not implement directly, are often slower than NGOs at delivering humanitarian assistance and their implementing partners face extremely high transaction costs”, ITAD writes. Instead, international organizations should serve more as enablers of other people’s work and not fly in with expensive materials and high salaries even times a crisis strikes, says Christina Bennett, a researcher at the Overseas Development Institute, a UK-based policy research organization. Bennett is the author of a recent report, Time to let go: remaking humanitarian action for the modern era. It calls for the UN and large international NGOs to let go of power and control, and enable national and local aid organizations to lead crisis response. One of the challenges is to raise funds for strengthening the capacity of local organizations.

This is exactly the logic behind the IFRC’s recently launched US$ 50 million National Society Investment Fund, which will raise money specifically for the organizational capacity of National Societies to meet the monitoring and reporting needs of donors and also seek new sources of funds in the local and national arena.

Getting money direct to the scene

When an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck the central coastline of Ecuador in April, Ecuadorian Red Cross emergency responders were among the first on the scene, searching for survivors, offering first aid, food, blankets and whatever comfort they could. With time of the essence, the National Society wasted no time raising the call for support. As an international emergency appeal was launched by the IFRC, the Ecuadorian Red Cross also turned to an online tool that offers a way for people to donate money directly to local relief organizations.

This online fund-raising platform also allows local organizations to reach out globally for support through their websites and social media. By mid-July, the effort had raised more than US$ 660,000 mainly due to donations triggered via social media, especially Twitter, as the Ecuadorian diaspora tweeted and re-tweeted the appeal. As the humanitarian sector debates ways to bring greater support directly to locally based organizations, this online platform offers an interesting option, particularly in the case of smaller disasters, which don’t gain widespread, international media coverage. When Tropical Storm Erika hit the island of Dominica in the western Caribbean in August 2015, floods and landslides claimed 11 lives and left more than 570 people without homes.

The crisis wasn’t big enough to make international headlines but the need for shelter, health services, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion was significant. The IFRC launched an emergency appeal and released US$ 171,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund but the National Society also turned to this online fundraising platform.

After one week, the Dominica Red Cross Society collected roughly US$ 11,000 and after one month, US$ 51,000 had been raised. The platform takes a 5 per cent fee for administrative expenses, but for the Dominica Red Cross, this is a small price given that they would not have received any of these donations.

The IFRC has worked with the Swiss Red Cross and the online fundraising platform to boost online fundraising for aid organizations in situations of conflict, too.

Continued from page 13

Resources

Joint International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Paper on the Grand Bargain

ICRC/IFRC, 2016

Humanitarian organizations are responding to more needs than ever. Future investment in humanitarian action must close the gap between growing demands and the resources available to meet them. The United Nations Secretary-General convened a High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, which released a report in January 2016. Among the proposed recommendations was a "Grand Bargain" between major donors and humanitarian organizations that seeks greater efficiency and improved incentives in financing humanitarian action. This joint IFRC-ICRC paper offers the Movement response to the Grand Bargain.

Available in English

Beyond Ebola: from dignified response to dignified recovery

ICRC, 2016

Ebole is no stranger to Africa but, for the past year and a half, the West African epidemic has forced us all to rethink how we should respond to health emergencies. Unless the lessons learned in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are put into practice, the virus disease will return — and a repetition does not bear thinking about.

Available in English

The Domestic Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CD version)

ICRC, 2015

This manual is a practical tool to assist policy-makers, legislators and other stakeholders worldwide in adhering to international humanitarian law (IHL) instruments and implementing them domestically. Drawing on the ICRC Advisory Service’s 15 years of experience, the manual offers guidance to help states implement IHL and meet all their obligations under that body of law, including the repression of serious violations. The document also includes links to the Treaties and Commentaries database and National Implementation database, while the CD version of the manual includes two databases: the database of national implementation measures and a compilation of IHL treaties and documents.

Available in English

Updated commentaries on the Geneva Conventions

ICRC, 2016

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 form the foundation of international humanitarian law and provide a framework for what is acceptable and what is prohibited in armed conflict. In the 1990s, the ICRC published a set of commentaries on these Conventions, giving practical guidance on their implementation. But to reflect the developments in law and practice since then, the ICRC has commissioned a new set of commentaries which seek to reflect the current interpretations of the Conventions. The first instalment, the updated Commentary on the First Convention, has been published online at www.icrc.org/ihl/f Pulic-commentary.

Available in English